

Thai cuisine



- Thai seafood curry



- Kaeng phet pet yang:

roast duck in red curry **Thai cuisine** is the national cuisine of Thailand. Blending elements of several Southeast Asian traditions, Thai cooking places emphasis on lightly prepared dishes with strong aromatic components. The spiciness of Thai cuisine is well known. As with other Asian cuisines, balance, detail and variety are of great significance to Thai chefs. Thai food is known for its balance of three to four fundamental taste senses in each dish or the overall meal: sour, sweet, salty, and bitter.^[1]

Influences

Although popularly considered a single cuisine, Thai cuisine is more accurately described as four regional cuisines corresponding to the four main regions of the country: Northern, Northeastern (or Isan), Central, and Southern, each cuisine sharing similar foods or foods derived from those of neighboring countries and regions: Burma to the northwest, the Chinese province of Yunnan and Laos to the north, Vietnam and Cambodia to the east and Malaysia to the south of Thailand. In addition to these four regional cuisines, there is also the Thai Royal Cuisine which can trace its history back to the cosmopolitan palace cuisine of the Ayutthaya kingdom (1351–1767 CE). Its refinement, cooking techniques and use of ingredients were of great influence to the cuisine of the Central Thai plains.

Thai cuisine and the culinary traditions and cuisines of Thailand's neighbors have mutually influenced one another over the course of many centuries. Regional variations tend to correlate to neighboring states (often sharing the same cultural background and ethnicity on both sides of the border) as well as climate and geography. Southern curries tend to contain coconut milk and fresh turmeric, while northeastern dishes often include lime juice. The cuisine of Northeastern (or Isan) Thailand is similar to southern Lao cuisine whereas northern Thai cuisine shares many dishes with northern Lao cuisine and the cuisine of Shan state in Burma. Many popular dishes eaten in Thailand were originally Chinese dishes which were introduced to Thailand mainly by the Teochew people who make up the majority of the Thai Chinese. Such dishes include *chok* (rice porridge), *kuai-tiao rat na* (fried rice-noodles) and *khao kha mu* (stewed pork with rice). The Chinese also introduced the use of a wok for cooking, the technique of deep-frying and stir-frying dishes, and noodles, oyster sauce and soybean products. Dishes such as *kaeng kari* (yellow curry)^[2] and *kaeng matsaman* (massaman curry) are Thai adaptations of dishes originating in the cuisine of India and the cuisine of Persia.^{[3][4]}

Serving

Thai meals typically consist of either a single dish or it will be rice (*khao* in Thai) with many complementary dishes served concurrently and shared by all. It is customary to serve more dishes than there are guests at a table.



Tom yam kung nam khon (Prawn tom yam with coconut milk)



Thai meal in a village temple

Thai food was traditionally eaten with the right hand but it is now generally eaten with a fork and a spoon; this was introduced as part of Westernization during the reign of King Mongkut, Rama IV. It was his brother, Vice-king Pinklao, who, after watching demonstration of Western dining etiquette by American missionary Dr. D. B. Bradley, chose only the Western-style fork and spoon from the whole set of table silverware to use at his own dining table. The fork, held in the left hand, is used to push food into the spoon. The spoon is then brought to the mouth. A traditional ceramic spoon is sometimes used for soups. Knives are not generally used at the table. Chopsticks are used primarily for eating

noodle soups, but not otherwise used.

It is common practice for Thais and hill tribe peoples in north and northeast Thailand to use sticky rice as an edible implement by shaping it into small, and sometimes flattened, balls by hand which are then dipped into side dishes and eaten. Thai-Muslims frequently eat meals with only their right hands.

Thai food is often served with a variety of sauces (*nam chim*) and condiments. These may include *phrik nam pla/nam pla phrik* (consisting of fish sauce, lime juice, chopped chilies and garlic), dried chili flakes, sweet chili sauce, sliced chili peppers in rice vinegar, sriracha sauce, or a spicy chili sauce or paste called *nam phrik*. In most Thai restaurants, diners can find a selection of Thai condiments, often including sugar or MSG, available on the dining table in small containers with tiny spoons. With certain dishes, such as *khao kha mu* (pork trotter stewed in soy sauce and served with rice), whole Thai peppers and raw garlic are served in addition. Cucumber is sometimes eaten to cool the mouth after particularly spicy dishes. They often also feature as a garnish, especially with one-dish meals. The plain rice, sticky rice or the *khanom chin* (Thai rice noodles) served alongside a spicy curry or stir-fry, tends to counteract the spiciness.



Phrik nam pla is served with nearly every meal

A Thai family meal will normally consist of rice with several dishes which form a harmonious contrast of ingredients and preparation methods. The dishes are all served at the same time. A meal at a restaurant for four people could, for instance, consist of fish in dry red curry (*chuchi pla*), a spicy green papaya salad with dried prawns, tomatoes, yardlong beans and peanuts (*som tam thai*), deep fried stuffed chicken wings (*pik kai sot sai thot*), a salad

of grilled beef, shallots and celery or mint (*yam nuea yang*), spicy stir fried century eggs with crispy basil (*khai yiao ma phat kraphao krop*), and a non-spicy vegetable soup with tofu and seaweed (*tom chuet taohu kap sarai*) to temper it all.

Ingredients



Pla thu (shortbodied mackerel) is often eaten together with *nam phrik kapi*



Several types of *kapi* (shrimp paste) and bags of *pla ra* (fish sauce) sold at a market



Snakehead fish packed with lemongrass and lime leaves ready for steaming

rice dishes such as *khao khluk kapi*.

Nam phrik are Thai chilli pastes, similar to the Indonesian and Malaysian sambals. Each region has its own special versions. The wording "*nam phrik*" is used by Thais to describe any

Thailand has about the same surface area as Spain and a length of approximately 1650 kilometers or 1025 miles (Italy, in comparison, is about 1250 kilometers or 775 miles long), with foothills of the Himalayas in the north, a high plateau in the northeast, a verdant river basin in the centre and tropical rainforests and islands in the south. And with over 40 distinct ethnic groups with each their own culture and even more languages,^[5] it doesn't come as a surprise that Thai cuisine, as a whole, is extremely varied and features many different ingredients and ways of preparing food. Thai food is known for its enthusiastic use of fresh (rather than dried) herbs and spices. Common herbs include cilantro, lemongrass, Thai basil and mint. Some other common flavors in Thai food come from ginger, galangal, tamarind, turmeric, garlic, soy beans, shallots, white and black peppercorn, kaffir lime and, of course, chilies.

Pastes and sauces

The ingredient found in almost all Thai dishes and every region of the country is *nam pla*, a very aromatic and strong tasting fish sauce. Fish sauce is a staple ingredient in Thai cuisine and imparts a unique character to Thai food. Fish sauce is prepared with fermented fish that is made into a fragrant condiment and provides a salty flavor. There are many varieties of fish sauce and many variations in the way it is prepared. Some fish may be fermented with shrimp and/or spices.

Pla ra is also a sauce made from fermented fish. It is more pungent than *nam pla*, and, in contrast to *nam pla* which is a clear liquid, it is opaque and often contains pieces of fish. To use it in *som tam* (spicy papaya salad) is a matter of choice.

Kapi, Thai shrimp paste, is a combination of fermented ground shrimp and salt. It is used, for instance, in red curry paste, in the famous chili paste called *nam phrik kapi* and in

paste containing chillies used for dipping. Curry pastes are normally called *phrik kaeng* or *khrueng kaeng*, litt. curry ingredients) but some people also use the word *nam phrik* to designate a curry paste. Red curry paste, for instance, could be called *phrik kaeng phet* or *khrueng kaeng phet* in Thai, but also *nam phrik kaeng phet*. Both *nam phrik* and *phrik kaeng* are prepared by crushing together chillies with various ingredients such as garlic and shrimp paste using a mortar and pestle. Some *nam phrik* are served as a dip with vegetables such as cucumbers, cabbage and yard-long beans, either raw or blanched. One such paste is *nam phrik num*, a paste of pounded fresh green chillies, shallots, garlic and coriander leaves. The sweet roasted chili paste called *nam phrik phao* is often used as an ingredient in *Tom yam* or when frying meat or seafood, and it is also popular as a spicy "jam" on bread. The dry *nam phrik kung*, made with pounded dried prawns (*kung haeng*, Thai: กุ้งแห้ง), is often eaten with rice and a few slices of cucumber.



Ingredients for green curry

The soy sauces which are used in Thai cuisine are of Chinese origin and the Thai names for them are (wholly or partially) loanwords from the Teochew language: *si-io dam* (dark soy sauce), *si-io khao* (light soy sauce), and *taochiao* (fermented whole soy beans). *Namman hoi* (oyster sauce) is also of Chinese origin. It is used extensively in vegetable and meat stir-fries.

Rice and noodles

Rice is a staple grain of Thai cuisine, as in most Asian cuisines. The highly prized, sweet-smelling jasmine rice is indigenous to Thailand. This naturally aromatic long-grained rice grows in abundance in the verdant patchwork of paddy fields that blanket Thailand's central plains. Steamed rice is accompanied by highly aromatic curries, stir-fries and other dishes, sometimes incorporating large quantities of chili peppers, lime juice and lemongrass/*maenglak*. Curries, stir-fries and others may be poured onto the rice creating a single dish called *khao rat kaeng* (Thai: ข้าวราดแกง), a popular meal when time is limited. Sticky rice (*khao niao*) is a unique variety of rice that contains an unusual balance of the starches present in all rice, causing it to cook up to a sticky texture. Sticky rice, not jasmine rice, is the staple food in the local cuisines of Northern Thailand and of Isan (Northeastern Thailand), both regions of Thailand directly adjacent to Laos with which they share this, and many other cultural traits.



Khanom chin, freshly made Thai rice noodles

Noodles are popular as well but usually come as a single dish, like the stir-fried *phat thai* or in the form of a noodle soup. Many Chinese dishes have been adapted to suit Thai taste, such as *kuai-tiao ruea* (a sour and spicy rice noodle soup). In Northern Thailand, *khao soi*, a curry soup with *bami* (egg noodles), is extremely popular in Chiang Mai. Noodles are usually made from either rice flour, wheat flour or mung bean flour and include six main types. Rice noodles are called *kuai tiao* in Thailand and comes in three varieties: *sen yai* are wide flat noodles, *sen lek* are thin flat rice noodles, and *sen mi* (also known as rice vermicelli in the West) is round and thin. *Bami* is made from egg and wheat flour and usually sold fresh. It is similar to the Chinese *mee pok* and *lamian*. *Wun sen* are extremely thin noodles made from mung bean flour which are sold dried. They are called cellophane noodles in English. *Khanom chin* is fresh Thai rice vermicelli made from fermented rice, well-known from dishes such as *khanom chin kaeng khiao wan kai* (rice noodles with green chicken curry).

Rice flour (*paeng khao chao*) and tapioca flour (*paeng man sampalang*) are often used in desserts and as thickening.

Vegetables, herbs and spices

Thai dishes use a wide variety of herbs, spices and leaves rarely found in the West, such as kaffir lime leaves (*bai makrut*). The characteristic flavor of kaffir lime leaves appears in nearly every Thai soup (e.g., the hot and sour *Tom yam*) or curry from the southern and central areas of Thailand. The Thai lime (*manao*) is smaller, darker and sweeter than the kaffir lime, which has a rough looking skin with a stronger lime flavor. Kaffir lime leaves are frequently combined with garlic (*krathiam*), galangal (*kha*), lemongrass (*takhrai*) and/or Thai lemon basil (*maenglak*), turmeric (*khamin*) and/or fingerroot (*krachai*), blended together with liberal amounts of various chillies to make curry paste. Fresh Thai basil leaves are also

used to add spice and fragrance in certain dishes such as Green curry, of which *kraphao* has a distinctive scent of clove and leaves which are often tipped with a maroon color. Further often used herbs in Thai cuisine include *phak chi*, (cilantro or coriander), *rak phak chi* (cilantro/coriander roots), culantro (*phak chi farang*), spearmint (*saranae*), and pandanus leaves (*bai toei*). Other spices and spice mixtures in Thai cuisine include *phong phalo* (five-spice powder), *phong kari* (curry powder), and fresh and dried peppercorns (*phrik thai*)



Fresh herbs, spices and vegetables at Thanin Market, Chiang Mai



Het fang (straw mushrooms) for sale at a market

Besides kaffir lime leaves, several other tree leaves are used in Thai cuisine such as *cha-om*, the young feathery leaves of the *Acacia pennata* tree, used cooked in omelettes, soups and curries and raw in salads of the Northern Thai cuisine. Banana leaves are often used as packaging for ready-made food or as steamer cups such as in *ho mok pla*, a spicy paté made with fish and coconut milk. Banana flowers are also used in Thai salads or minced and deep fried in to patties. The leaves and flowers of the neem tree (*sadao*) are also eaten blanched.

Five main chillies are generally used as ingredients in Thai food. One chili is very small (about 1.25 centimetres (**unknown operator: u'strong'** in)) and is known as the hottest chili: *phrik khi nu suan* ("garden mouse-dropping chili"). The slightly larger chili *phrik khi nu* ("mouse-dropping chili") is the next hottest. The green or red *phrik chi fa* ("sky pointing chili") is slightly less spicy than the smaller chillies. The very large *phrik yuak*, which is pale green in color, is the least spicy and used more as a vegetable. Lastly, the dried chillies: *phrik haeng* are spicier than the two largest chillies and dried to a dark red color.

Other typical ingredients are the several types of eggplant (*makhuea*) used in Thai cuisine, such as the pea-sized *makhuea phuang* and the egg-sized *makhuea suai*, often also eaten raw. Although broccoli is often used in Asian restaurants in the west in *phat thai* and *rat na*, it was never actually used in any traditional Thai food in Thailand and is still rarely seen in Thailand. Usually in Thailand, khana is used, for which broccoli is a substitute. Other vegetables which are often eaten in Thailand are *thua fak yao* (yardlong beans), *thua ngok* (bean sprouts), *no mai* (bamboo shoots), tomatoes, cucumbers, *phak tam leung* (*Coccinia grandis*), *kha na* (Chinese kale), *phak kwangtung* (choy sum), *cha om* (tender *Acacia pennata* leaves), sweet potatoes (used more as a vegetable), a few types of squash, *phakatin* (*Leucaena leucocephala*), *sataw* (*Parkia speciosa*), *tua phū* (Winged beans) and *kapōt* corn.

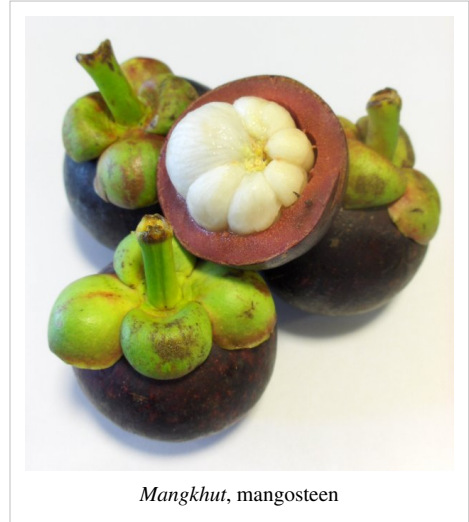
Among the green leafy vegetables that are usually eaten raw in the meal or as a side dish in Thailand, the most important are: *Phak bung* (morning-glory), *hōrapha* (Thai basil), *bai bua bok* (Asian pennywort), *phak kachēt* (water mimosa), *phak kat khao* (Chinese cabbage), *kra thin Thai* (ipil-ipil), *phak phai* (Praew leaves), *phak kayang* (Rice Paddy Herb), *phak chī farang* (*Eryngium foetidum*), *phak tiu* (*Cratogeomys formosum*), *phak "phaai"* (Yellow Burr

Head) and *kalampī* (cabbage).^[6] Some of these leaves are highly perishable and must be used within a couple of days.

Several types of mushroom (*het*) also feature in Thai cuisine such as straw mushrooms (*het fang*) and white jelly fungus (*het hu nu khao*).^[7]

Fruits

Fruit forms a large part of the Thai diet and are customarily served after a meal. Although many of the exotic fruits of Thailand may have been sometimes unavailable in Western countries, many Asian markets import such fruits as rambutan and lychees. In Thailand one can find papaya, jackfruit, mango, mangosteen, langsat, longan, pomelo, pineapple, rose apples, durian and other native fruits. Chantaburi in Thailand each year holds the *World Durian Festival* in early May. This single province is responsible for half of the durian production of Thailand and a quarter of the world production.^{[8][9][10]}



Mangkhut, mangosteen



Banana flowers and leaves at Thanin market, Chiang Mai

The fruit of the tamarind is used to make sour dishes, and palm sugar, made from the sap of certain *Borassus* palms, is used to sweeten dishes. From the coconut palm comes coconut sugar, coconut vinegar, and coconut milk. The juice of a green coconut can be served as a drink and the young flesh can be eaten.

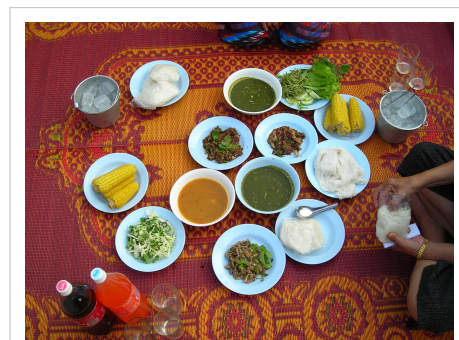
Apples, grapes, pears and strawberries, which do not traditionally grow in Thailand, have become increasingly popular in recent years. They are being grown locally in the cooler highlands and mountains of Thailand, mainly in the North, but now most are imported from China.

Representative dishes

Many Thai dishes are familiar in the West. In the many dishes below, different kinds of protein, or combinations of protein, can be chosen as ingredients, such as beef (*nuea*, Thai: เนื้อ), chicken (*kai*, Thai: ไก่), pork (*mu*, Thai: หมู), duck (*pet*, Thai: เป็ด), tofu (*taohu*, Thai: เต้าหู้) or seafood (*thale*, Thai: ทะเล).

Breakfast dishes

Thai cuisine doesn't have very specific breakfast dishes. Very often, a Thai breakfast can consist of the same dishes which are also eaten for lunch or dinner. Fried rice, noodle soups and steamed rice with



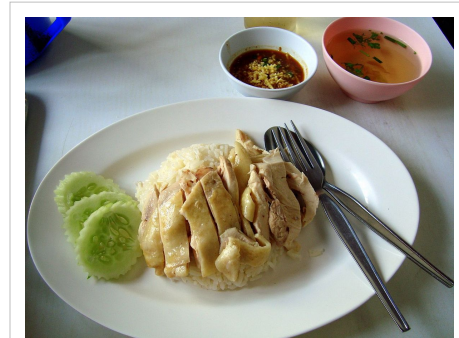
A typical family breakfast in Isan

something simple such as an omelette, fried pork or chicken, are commonly sold from street stalls as a quick take-out. The following dishes tend to be eaten only for breakfast:

- *Chok* - a rice porridge commonly eaten in Thailand for breakfast. Similar to the rice congee eaten in other parts of Asia.
- *Khao khai chiao* - an omelet (*khai chiao*) with white rice, often eaten with a chili sauce and slices of cucumber.
- *Khao tom* - a Thai style rice soup, usually with pork, chicken or shrimp.

Individual dishes

- *Khanom chin nam ngiao* - A speciality of Northern Thailand, it is Thai fermented rice noodles served with pork blood tofu in a sauce made with pork broth and tomato, crushed fried dry chilies, pork blood, dry fermented soy bean, and dried red kapok flowers.^[11]
- *Khanom chin namya* - round boiled rice noodles topped with a fish based sauce and eaten with fresh leaves and vegetables.
- *Khao khluk kapi* - rice stir-fried with shrimp paste, served with sweetened pork and vegetables.
- *Khao man kai* - rice steamed in chicken stock with garlic, with boiled chicken, chicken stock and a dipping sauce.
- *Khao phat* - One of the most common dishes in Thailand, fried rice, Thai style. Usually with chicken, beef, shrimp, pork, crab or coconut or pineapple, or vegetarian (*che* (Thai: เจ)).
- *Khao phat American* - American fried rice that can be found only in Thailand.
- *Khao phat kai* - fried rice with chicken.
- *Khao phat mu* - fried rice with pork.
- *Khao phat pu* - fried rice with crab meat.
- *Khao phat kung* - fried rice with shrimp.
- *Khao phat naem* - fried rice with fermented sausage (*naem*, Thai: แหนม), a typically dish from the Northeast)
- *Khao soi* - crispy wheat noodles in sweet chicken curry soup (a Northern dish).
- *Kuai-tiao nam* - rice-noodle soup can be eaten at any time of day; served with many combinations of proteins, vegetables, and spicy condiments. The word *kuai-tiao*, although originally designating only one type of noodle, the *sen yai* (wide rice noodles), is used colloquially for all rice noodles in general.



Khao man kai



Phat si-io

- *Mi krop* - deep fried rice vermicelli with a sweet and sour sauce.

- *Phat khi mao* - noodles stir-fried with Thai basil.
- *Phat si-io* - rice noodles (often *kuai tiao*) stir-fried with *si-io dam* (thick sweet soy sauce) and *nam pla* (fish sauce) and pork or chicken.
- *Phat thai* - rice noodles pan fried with fish sauce, sugar, lime juice or tamarind pulp, chopped peanuts, and egg combined with chicken, seafood, or tofu.
- *Kuai-tiao rat na* - wide rice noodles in gravy, with beef, pork, chicken, shrimp, or seafood.



Phat thai kung

Central Thai shared dishes

- *Chuchi pla kaphong* - snapper in chuchi curry sauce (thick red curry sauce)
- *Ho mok pla* - a paté of fish, spices, coconut milk and egg, steamed in a banana leaf cup and topped with thick coconut cream before serving.
- *Kai phat khing* - chicken stir-fried with sliced ginger.
- *Kaeng khiao wan* - called "green curry" in English, it is a coconut curry made with fresh green chillies and flavoured with Thai basil, and chicken or fish meatballs. This dish can be one of the spiciest of Thai curries.
- *Kaeng phanaeng* - a mild creamy coconut curry with beef (*Phanaeng nuea*), chicken, or pork. It includes some roasted dried spices similar to *Kaeng matsaman*.
- *Kaeng phet* (lit. 'spicy curry') - also known as *red curry* in English, it is a coconut curry made with copious amounts of dried red chillies in the curry paste.
- *Kaeng som* (Thai: แกงส้ม) - a hot and sour soup/curry usually eaten together with rice



Ho mok pla, fish curry paté



Phat khana mu krop



Phak bung fai daeng: fried morning-glory

- *Kai phat met mamuang himmaphan* - The Thai Chinese version of the Sichuan style chicken with cashews known as *Kung Pao chicken*, fried with whole dried chillies.
- *Miang kham* - dried shrimp and other ingredients wrapped in *cha plu* leaves; often eaten as a snack or a starter.
- *Phak bung fai daeng* - stir fried morning-glory with yellow bean paste.
- *Phat khana mu krop* - khana (gailan) stir fried with crispy pork.
- *Phat kraphao* - beef, pork, prawns or chicken stir fried with Thai holy basil, chillies and garlic; for instance *kai phat kraphao* (Thai:

ไก่ผัดกะเพรา), with minced chicken.

- *Phat phak ruam* - stir fried combination of vegetables depending on availability and preference.
- *Phat phrik* - usually beef stir fried with chilli, called *Nuea phat phrik* (Thai: เนื้อผัดพริก).
- *Pla nueng manao* - steamed fish with a spicy lime juice dressing.
- *Pla sam rot* - literally "Three flavours fish": deep fried fish with a sweet, tangy and spicy tamarind sauce.



Pla sam rot



Thot man pla krai with fried basil

- *Pu cha* - a mixture of cooked crab meat, pork, garlic and pepper, deep fried inside the crab shells and served with a simple spicy sauce, such as Sri Rachaa sauce, sweet-hot garlic sauce, *nam phrik phao* (Thai: น้ำพริกเผา, roasted chilli paste), *nam chim buai* (Thai: น้ำจิ้มบ๊วย, plum sauce), or in a red curry paste, with chopped green onions. It is sometimes also served as deep fried patties instead of being fried in the crab shell.
- *Suki* - a Thai variant of the Chinese hot pot.
- *Thot man* - deep fried fishcake made from knifefish (*Thot man pla krai*, Thai: ทอดมันปลากราย) or shrimp (*Thot*

man kung, Thai: ทอดมันกุ้ง).

- *Tom chuet wun sen* or *Kaeng chuet wunsen* - a clear soup with vegetables and wunsen (cellophane noodles made from mung bean).
- *Tom kha kai* - hot spicy soup with coconut milk, galangal and chicken.
- *Tom yam* - hot & sour soup with meat. With shrimp it is called *Tom yam goong* or *Tom yam kung* (Thai: ต้มยำกุ้ง), with seafood (typically shrimp, squid, fish) *Tom yam thale* (Thai: ต้มยำทะเล), with chicken *Tom yam kai* (Thai: ต้มยำไก่).
- *Yam* - general name for any type of sour salad, such as those made with glass noodles (*Yam wunsen*, Thai: ยำวุ้นเส้น), with seafood (*Yam thale*, Thai: ยำทะเล), or grilled beef (*Yam nuea* Thai: ยำเนื้อ). The dressing of a "Yam" will normally consist of shallots, fish sauce, tomato, lime juice, sugar, chillies and Thai celery (*khuenchai*, Thai: ขึ้นฉ่าย) or coriander.
- *Yam pla duk fu* - crispy fried catfish with a spicy, sweet-and-sour, green mango salad.

Northeastern shared dishes

The cuisine of Northeastern Thailand generally feature dishes similar to those found in Laos, as Isan people historically have close ties with Lao culture and speak a language that is generally mutually intelligible with the Lao language.



Som tam (papaya salad), *kai yang* (grilled chicken) and *khao niao* (sticky rice) is a traditional Lao and Isan combination



Lap mu (Lao and Isan pork salad)



Mu yang with *Nam chim chaeo*: grilled neck of pork with a chili dip

- *Kai yang* - marinated, grilled chicken.
- *Khao niao* - Sticky rice is eaten as a staple food both in the Northeast as in the North of Thailand; it is traditionally steamed.
- *Mu ping* - marinated, grilled pork on a stick.
- *Lap* - a traditional Lao salad containing meat, onions, chillies, roasted rice powder and garnished with mint.
- *Nam chim chaeo* - is a sticky, sweet and spicy dipping sauce made with dried chillies, fish sauce, palm sugar and black roasted rice flour. It is often served as a dip with *mu yang*, grilled pork).
- *Nam tok* - made with pork (*mu*) or beef (*nuea*) and somewhat identical to *lap*, except that the pork or beef is cut into thin strips rather than minced.
- *Som tam* - grated papaya salad, pounded with a mortar and pestle, similar to the Laos Tam mak hoong. There are three main variations: *som tam pu* (Thai: ส้มตำปู) with salted black crab, and *som tam thai* (Thai: ส้มตำไทย) with peanuts, dried shrimp and palm sugar and *som tam pla ra* (Thai: ส้มตำปลาร้า) from the north eastern part of Thailand (Isan), with salted gourami fish, white eggplants, fish sauce and long beans. Som tam is usually eaten with sticky rice but a popular variation is to serve it with *khanom chin* (rice noodles) instead.
- *Suea rong hai* - grilled beef brisket.
- *Tom saep* - Northeastern-style hot & sour soup.
- *Yam naem*, a snack made of crumbled crisp rice balls, minced pork, ginger, green chillies, peanuts and onion.

Northern shared dishes



A selection of Northern Thai dishes served as starters

- *Kaeng hang-le* - a Burmese influenced stewed pork curry which uses peanuts, dried chilies and tamarind juice in the recipe but containing no coconut milk.
- *Kaeng khae* - is a spicy northern Thai curry of herbs, vegetables, the leaves of an acacia tree (*chaom*) and meat (chicken, water buffalo, pork or frog). It also does not contain any coconut milk.
- *Kaep mu* - deep fried crispy pork rinds, often eaten with *nam phrik num*. Also eaten as a snack.
- *Nam phrik num* - a chili paste of pounded large green chilies, shallots, garlic, coriander leaves, lime juice and fish sauce; eaten with steamed and raw vegetables, and sticky rice.
- *Nam phrik ong* - resembling a thick Bolognese sauce, it is made with dried chilies, minced pork and tomato; eaten with steamed and raw vegetables, and sticky rice.
- *Sai ua* - a grilled sausage of ground pork mixed with spices and herbs; it is often served with chopped fresh ginger and chilies at a meal. It is also sold at markets in Chiang Mai as a snack.

Southern shared dishes

- *Kaeng lueang* - a sour spicy yellow curry that does not contain coconut milk, often with fish and vegetables.
- *Kaeng matsaman* - also known in English as *Massaman curry*, it is an Indian style curry, usually made by Thai-Muslims, of stewed beef and containing roasted dried spices, such as coriander seed, that are rarely found in other Thai curries.
- *Kaeng tai pla* - a thick sour vegetable curry made with turmeric and shrimp paste, often containing roasted fish or fish innards, bamboo shoots and eggplant.
- *Khua kling* - a very dry spicy curry made with minced or diced meat with sometimes yardlong beans added to it; often served with fresh green *phrik khi nu* (thai chilies) and copious amounts of finely shredded *bai makrut* (kaffir lime leaves).
- *Sate* - grilled meat, usually pork or chicken, served with cucumber salad and peanut sauce (actually of Indonesian origin, but now a popular street food in Thailand).
- *Khao yam* - a rice salad from Southern Thailand.^[12]



Massaman curry

Desserts, sweet snacks and drinks

Desserts and sweet snacks

Most Thai meals finish with fresh fruit but sometimes a sweet snack will be served as a dessert.

- *Chaokuai* - grass jelly is often served with only shaved ice and brown sugar.
- *Khanom bua loi* – mashed taro root and pumpkin are mixed with rice flour into small balls, boiled and then served in coconut milk.
- *Khanom chan* – multi-layers of pandan-flavored sticky rice flour mixed with coconut milk.
- *Khanom mo kaeng* - a sweet baked pudding containing coconut milk, eggs, palm sugar and flour, sprinkled with sweet fried onions.
- *Khanom tan* – palm flavored mini cake with shredded coconut on top.
- *Khanom thuai talai* - steamed sweet coconut jelly and cream.
- *Khao lam* - A cake made from steamed rice mixed with beans or peas, grated coconut and coconut milk.
- *Khao niao mamuang* - sticky rice cooked in sweetened thick coconut milk, served with slices of ripe mango.
- *Lot chong nam kathi* – pandan flavored rice flour noodles in coconut milk, similar to the Indonesian cendol.
- *Ruam mit* – mixed ingredients, such as chestnuts covered in flour, jackfruit, lotus root, tapioca, and *lot chong*, in coconut milk.
- *Sarim* – multi-colored mung bean flour noodles in sweetened coconut milk served with crushed ice.
- *Sangkha fak thong* - egg and coconut custard served with pumpkin, similar to the coconut jam of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.
- *Tako* - jasmine scented coconut pudding set in cups of fragrant pandanus leaf.

Drinks

- *Cha yen* - Thai iced tea
- *Krating Daeng* - an energy drink and the origin of Red Bull.
- *Oliang* - a sweet Thai black ice coffee.
- *Satho* - a traditional rice wine from the Isan region.

Other alcoholic beverages from Thailand include Mekhong whiskey and Sang Som. Several brands of beer are brewed in Thailand, the two biggest brands being Singha and Chang.



Chaokuai at the Sunday evening walking street market in Chiang Mai



Khao niao mamuang, mango with sticky rice

Insects

Certain insects are also eaten in Thailand, especially in Isan and in the North. Many markets in Thailand feature stalls which sell deep-fried grasshoppers, crickets (*chingrit*, Thai: จิ้งหรีด), bee larvae, silkworm (*non mai*, Thai: หนอนไหม), ant eggs (*khai mot*, Thai: ไช้เม็ด) and termites. The culinary creativity even extends to naming: one tasty larva, which is also known under the name "bamboo worm" (*non mai phai*, Thai: หนอนไม้ไผ่, *Omphisa fuscidentalis*),^[13] is colloquially called "freight train" (*rot duan*; Thai: รถด่วน) due to its appearance.

Most of the insects taste fairly bland when deep-fried, somewhat like popcorn and prawns. But when deep-fried together with kaffir lime leaves, chilies and garlic, the insects become an excellent snack to go with a drink. In contrast to the bland taste of most of these insects, the *maeng da* or *maelong da na* (Thai: แมลงดานา, *Lethocerus indicus*) has been described as having a very penetrating taste, similar to that of a very ripe gorgonzola cheese. This giant water bug is famously used in a chili dip called *nam phrik maengda*. Some insects, such as ant eggs and silk worms, are also eaten boiled in a soup in Isan.



A street stall selling fried insects

Culinary tours and cooking courses

Culinary tours of Thailand have gained popularity in recent years. Alongside other forms of tourism in Thailand, food tours have carved a niche for themselves. Many companies offer culinary and cooking tours of Thailand and many tourists visiting Thailand attend cooking courses offered by hotels, guesthouses and cooking schools.

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A street vendor selling different types of salapao (steamed buns) from a street stall fixed to the side of his motorbike

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